

Denise Aigle, Isabelle Charleux, Vincent Goossaert and Roberte Hamayon editors, *Mélanges en l'honneur de / Festschrift in Honour of Françoise Aubin*, Miscellanea Asiatica, Institut Monumenta Serica, Sankt Augustin, Germany, 2010, XVI-811 pp., ISBN 978-3-8050-0568-5

This impressive volume of *Mélanges* or “festive writings” celebrates the equally impressive achievements of Françoise Aubin, “a great humanist and scholar” in Central Asian studies, as the editors of the book write in their opening introduction (pp. 1-11). It is only, before anything else, by giving a glimpse of the intellectual and academic career of Françoise Aubin that the studies in the various fields of her research gathered in the book acquire their academic coherence.

To start with come the skills in oriental languages: Russian, Japanese and Chinese, to which she added also Mongol, Turkic languages and lately Arabic (from July 2009 on; p. 7). These have been for a life long research on Chinese and Mongolian studies the basic tools enabling her to rely on original sources and not on translations. Then, mention is made of her training in law which gave in 1965 to her doctoral dissertation entitled “Popular uprising in North China between 1214 and 1230” its original depth. It was a perspective through which she studied the impact that Chinggis Khan’s conquest and rule have had on Chinese rural society. Field work in Mongolia in 1966-67 added to her scholarly approach some “anthropological sensibility” (p. 8). It allowed her to have fecund and intuitive observations on traditional (the “nationalist” figure of Chinggis Khan) and social changes (“ideological” festivals) impacted by the communist regime. During her working years at the ‘Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique’ [CNRS] (1954-2006) and later at the ‘Centre d’Études Internationales’ [CERI, Centre for International Studies] in Paris, she opened new scientific fields of research. Among them was the East Asian missionary history, that delved mainly on the Chinese language Catholic and Protestant missions, particularly in Inner Mongolia until 1949. That gave her also the occasion to enlarge the scope of her approach and to study the missions among the Chinese Muslims. From there on, her scholarly contributions initiated the field of Chinese Islam studies in connection with the Arabic and Persian world, where her late husband, Jean Aubin, had been an authority.

It would be going beyond the limits of this review to dig into greater details Françoise Aubin’s achievements as they are displayed in her Bibliography (pp. 13-74). The publications are listed year by year till 2010 and include articles of her many fields of research, as suggested supra, and an impressive collection of 1,048 book reviews that have manifested her immense culture and wide academic interests.

The book itself is made of five broadly entitled sections that obviously span the large spectrum of Françoise Aubin’s personal research in Central Asian and Chinese studies.

To honour the fecund influence that her earlier field work has had on her understanding of Mongol culture, first come seven studies under the heading of “About Animals and Humans”, that is in Mongolia. Horses are not only studied in the customary framework of “itinerant pastoralism and military strategies”, but more deeply on the basis of archaeological artefacts that reveal their real value through the symbols they carry which remain present in the life of the Mongol society (ANDRÉ and others, p. 77-120). This is all the more true that three studies focus on the link between “child rearing and horse breaking: their analogies as ways to action” (FERRET, p. 141-172 and LACAZE, p. 209-224), or between the “dressage of the horses” and the “invisible things” prone to happen, as reactions of horses are interpreted as good or ill omens (DELAPLACE, p. 121-139). The central place of the horses in Mongol culture is

also studied by one contribution from a political perspective: “elites of rural origins” are of great influence (GARDELLE, p. 173-184). Hence the interesting presentation made of the rites of birth among Halh Mongols (RUHLMANN, p. 225-247).

Other Mongol Studies will follow, not in the second, but in the third section entitled: “Mongol Studies: Law, Society and Culture” made of nine contributions. But one wonders what principle has guided the editors in the succession of these studies. The first entitled “Emotion in Politics” explains modern Mongolia’s “State Rituals And The Relationship Between Their Constituent Elements And The Whole” (BLANQUIS, p. 373-386). This is curiously followed by an interesting research on the “Sources of Law in Mongol-Yuan China (1260-1368)” centred on the legal problem of “Adjudication in the Absence of a Legal Code” (BIRGE, p. 387-406). Then based on a generous iconographic documentation comes a research on the “Changing Criteria of Authenticity” for the “Several Ancient and Modern Portraits of Chinggis Khan in the Mongol World”, included the present period (CHARLEUX, p. 407-469). Two communications follow, one of the epigraphic genre entitled “On the Mongol Text of the Pinggu Inscription in Square Script (1306)” (KARA, p. 471-477), the other of interest to historians and anthropologists under the title “Steppe Societies, Nomadic Empires and North China. Historical and Anthropological Interactions” (LEGRAND, p. 479-497). Two samples of missiological studies are then successively given, one: “Bread and Wine”, that critically examines a Mongolian translation on Matthew’s Gospel, chapter 26, 26-30 (SAGASTER, p. 499-515); the other: “Sing Us Some Ordos Song!”, that presents the “Translation and Literary Composition of a Christian Catholic Hymnal in Mongolian” (PALUSSIÈRE, p. 517-544). The reader is then redirected to traditional Mongolian society by a thorough study of “Some Ritual Celebrations Linked to the New Yurt” mounted for any newly wed couple, where the multiplicity of rites and rubrics would stupefy the best liturgists of the world... (POP, p. 545-571). From this joyful atmosphere, a quite sad and last contribution concludes the section: “Some Remarks on the Offence of Murder in the Mongol Tradition (Thirteenth to Nineteenth Century)”, which painstakingly but clearly explains, based on Mongolian terminology, that not every killing is a murder... (VEIT, p. 573-590). This section is the main one among the others of the volume. Specialists would certainly agree that by the high quality of their erudition, the contributions to these “mélanges” would probably have not gained much from a less disturbing order.

Yet a question remains related to the second section of the book. It is inserted between the above mentioned two sections on Mongolian studies, and is entitled: “Islam in Central and East Asia”. Why such a puzzling diversion? Short as it is, this section is made of four contributions only, loosely connected to each other. They are nevertheless important in the present geopolitical context. Islam has had a long historical presence in China, as the first study rightly summarizes. In China, “To be a (回 Hui) Chinese Muslim” and recognised as such has been the result of long “Evolutions in Orthodoxy and Practices” (ALLÈS, p. 251-270). Along the winding roads of history, some figures have emerged, as the fourth and last contribution entitled “Liu Zhi’s Neo-Confucian Islam” explains and illustrates. 劉智 Liu Zhi (ca. 1660-ca. 1739) in his *magnum opus* 《天方性理》 *Tianfang Xingli* present “The Philosophy of Islam” in neo-Confucian terms, hence the academic interest of the study of such an author (MURATA, p. 345-370). The other two contributions lead the reader first to Iran, under the Pahlavi monarchy (XIX-XXth centuries): “Zahedan vs. Qom? Iranian Sunnites and the rise of Baluchistan as a Centre of Hanafi Lawmaking (DUDOIGNON, p. 271-315) and to Japan, “Retracing the ‘Muslim Word’ in Japan in the 1930s” (MASASHI, p. 317-343).

With the fourth section, the *Mélanges* leave Mongolia and enter China proper, or rather “China and Its Others” as the title sums up the following contributions. But

once again, in quite a dispersed order. After an interesting study on “The Notion of Tribe in Medieval China” focused on “Ouyang Xiu and the Shatuo Dynastic Myth” (ATWOOD, p. 593-621), a jump forward in time introduces “俞樾 Yu Yue (1821-1906) and his reflections on the “Other World” so popular in Chinese culture of his time, a very well studied case of the “Religious Culture Among Chinese Elites Before the Modern Revolutions” (GOOSSAERT, p. 623-656). Then, back again in history, come a study on “Some Refugees in South-East Asia at the Beginning of the Yuan Dynasty (SALMON, p. 657-680).

As if it were to draw a parallel with “China and Its Others”, the fifth section entitled “European Visions of East Asia” uses a kind of wide angle lens to conclude this *Festschrift*. First comes “The Integration of the Mongols in the Medieval Eschatological Dreams” by the main editor of the volume (AIGLE, p. 683-717), a thorough study not deprived of surprises or suspense. It is followed by an erudite examination of “The Christian *carrière* of King Cheng Tang” of the 書經 *Shujing* “in the “Western and Chinese Christian texts of the 17th and 18th centuries” (p. 719; MALEK, p. 719-752). Then a short interlude of Iranian background presents in these “*mélanges*” of Asian Studies “Jean Philippe Rameau’s *Zoroastre* compared to the *Magic Flute*” (GIGNOUX, p. 753-763), followed by a commemoration of “Pēteris Šmits as a Manchu and Chinese Expert” (WALRAVENS, p. 765-779). The last pages with their reproductions of clippings offer, as if it were in some “contrapuntal” composition, “The Roerich Expedition to Central Asia (1925-1928) or the Search for Shambhala”, an interesting yet awakening misadventure of the “European Visions of East Asia” (SAVELLI, p. 781-811).

Perhaps would it not be out of tune before concluding to mention that most of the contributions loosely distributed in these *Mélanges* are written in French (but each followed by a short summary in English); only seven are in English and one in German; each of them with some abundant bibliography. Ten are also illustrated by graphics or coloured illustrations and tables, listed after the page of Contents and carefully referenced (pp. VIII-XVI). With such an high academic standard, most of the scholars who could profit from the studies presented in the book would probably deeply regret the absence of any Index.

Yves Camus